

The Renewal Alliance

Member Personal Statements

SENATOR SPENCE ABRAHAM

The 1996 Welfare Reform bill was an important first step in recognizing that states and localities are better suited to meet people's needs than the federal government. Now is the time to take the next step by promoting non-governmental solutions to human problems. Proposals that invite, encourage, and empower charities, families, churches, small businesses and community organizations to be more active in the hard essential work of social renewal help attain that goal. Not only does this mean expanding tax incentives for charitable work, but increasing the role played by faith-based organizations with proven track records. It means not just encouraging economic growth, but targeting that growth at distressed communities through enterprise zones and other incentives. Finally, it also means not just providing job training programs for the unemployed, but working with schools and employers to ensure that kids with high school diplomas have the skills necessary to get a good job.

SENATOR JOHN ASHCROFT

In 1996, Senator Ashcroft shepherded the Charitable Choice provision on the new welfare law through Congress. This landmark legislation allows charitable and faith-based organizations to become more involved in curing the social pathologies that plague our culture. Ashcroft has been named Chairman of the Republican Workplace Task Force in recognition of his leadership on S.4, the Family Friendly Workplace Act, a bill that would allow parents to better meet the responsibilities of work and home.

SENATOR SAM BROWNBACK

Compared to only thirty years ago, America's rates of violent crime, illegitimacy, family dissolution, and juvenile crime have reached unfathomable levels. It is incumbent upon us to address these indicators of cultural and social regression.

Opening the doors of opportunity requires a long-term commitment to strengthening families, improving schools, expanding job creation, encouraging entrepreneurship, reducing illegitimacy, and revitalizing the civil society institutions of charity, churches, volunteer groups, and community organizations. As a result, I have focused the work of the government oversight subcommittee I chair on strengthening (and removing government impediments to) the work of private charities, education reform, and adoption reform. By seeking to empower individuals and families instead government bureaucracies, the Renewal Alliance has made important progress in removing government impediments to the reinvigoration of civil society.

SENATOR DAN COATS

I agree with writer Michael Novak, who said, “The political party that best makes mediating structures the North Star of a new bipartisan agenda will dominate practical politics for the next 50 years.” The members of the Renewal Alliance intend to test that theory. The REAL Life legislative initiative will create a genuine partnership between the federal government and the private, religious and voluntary institutions that undergird the strength of local communities. This plan will encourage private and religious charities, revive urban economies and provide educational alternatives to low-income families whose children are trapped in dysfunctional schools. I believe REAL Life, by focusing on the need to restore the social, economic and human capital of impoverished urban neighborhoods will bring real opportunity to millions who are currently without hope for the future.

SENATOR PAUL COVERDELL

The Renewal Alliance represents an effort to return freedom to America’s families, communities, and citizens to do things important to them for their own well-being. Families and citizens cannot be truly free when the government takes, as it does today, over half their hard-earned wages. This severely impedes families’ ability to do those things they need to do and limits options available to earlier American families. My parents’ generation was able to keep about 80% of their wages, while today’s average family keeps only 45%. I want to reverse this stifling burden and have families and citizens keep—only as a beginning—over half their earnings.

CONGRESSMAN PHIL ENGLISH

Representative English is deeply committed to creating jobs and supporting efforts that strengthen communities in urban America. As a member of the Ways and Means Committee, Representative English was active in recrafting welfare policy in the 104th Congress. Sharing the vision of the Renewal Alliance, English believes that the next step in addressing our urban challenges is seeking ways to assist the revitalization initiatives of local communities and neighborhoods.

CONGRESSWOMAN KAY GRANGER

Kay Granger’s personal philosophy is simple—we make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. She believes the keys to re-igniting the American flame in the future are found not in the halls of Congress but in city halls and town halls all across America. She believes by giving local communities the tools they need, they can create the neighborhoods they deserve. Her vision is one of a compassionate society where individuals matter, character counts, and people take care of themselves and each other. In short, Kay Granger believes we must all work together to ensure that America remains a place where people do well by doing good.

SENATOR CHUCK HAGEL

I believe the most important challenge facing society is to re-attach ourselves to a value system anchored by personal responsibility. Family, churches, synagogues, private and voluntary organizations are the foundations of a strong and vibrant nation. Values do count, and we must return to faith in God and the individual. We need to remember that our shared values are distilled from the broad tapestry of American life—from the many religions and traditions that are part of our shared culture. We must return to personal responsibility and limited government. Limited government respects private values; overpowering government undermines those values.

SENATOR TIM HUTCHINSON

Since his arrival in Congress, Tim Hutchinson has worked hard to change the “Washington-knows-best” approach to legislating; believing that states and localities are more effective than the federal government in crafting programs to meet the individual needs of its citizens. As a member of the 1996 Welfare Reform conference committee, Hutchinson fought hard for middle-class families by working to include a \$500 per child tax credit provision. Within days of being sworn in as the first popularly-elected Republican Senator from Arkansas, Hutchinson introduced stand-alone legislation that would provide permanent tax relief to all working American families through a \$500 per child tax credit. Now as a member of the Renewal Alliance, Hutchinson looks forward to initiating legislation that seeks to reduce governmental barriers and provide incentives to allow faith-based institutions and the private sector to help renew American society.

CONGRESSMAN JOHN KASICH

“I am very excited about REAL Life and it’s efforts to support the Charity Tax Credit. It plays a big part in getting people to work from their hearts and from their pockets at the same time. Both the economics and the love quotient are being put together in order to improve people’s lives in a real way. It is all about local solutions to local problems.

An example of this is The Charity Tax Credit. It was designed to encourage states to give tax credits (\$250 for individuals, \$500 for married couples) to people who contribute to a local charity. If you live in Columbus, Ohio and you want to help an organization which is involved with serving the poor, then you can give your check directly to that local charity organization.

This achieves several things. First, it gets you more involved in your community. Second, you are more likely to find out what’s going on with your local charity organizations. Third, it’s more direct. It gives you a better understanding of what’s going on so you can develop appropriate solutions in your community. Finally, states will have the flexibility to enact and run the program.”

CONGRESSMAN JOSEPH KNOLLENBERG

For too long, we have measured compassion by the amount of money spent on a program. Yet, for years private charities have exemplified compassion by operating programs that have helped fight poverty with an efficient and cost-effective manner. The charitable tax credit is one small part of a larger agenda of non-government solutions pushed by the Renewal Alliance. Both empower individuals, break the bureaucracy and encourage private charities to lead the fight against poverty. It is a strategy that is a proven winner.

CONGRESSMAN JIM KOLBE

With the introduction of the Kolbe/Knollenberg charitable tax credit bill early in the 104th Congress, Congressman Kolbe focused on legislative initiatives that shift the welfare pendulum back toward charities, families, and community organizations. The charitable tax credit takes the next step in reforming our welfare program by giving taxpayers a voice in how to deliver services in their communities, and de-emphasizes the impersonal public welfare bureaucracy. Private charities and community organizations have not only provided effective assistance, but hands-on attention to each recipient. The Renewal Alliance does not stop with welfare reform—it goes beyond reform to restore hope and purpose for every family and community. Our measure of service should not be how many families receive food stamps or a government check, but how many families return to the workforce and live out the American dream.

SENATOR JON L. KYL

The need to repair our deteriorating culture has become obvious to most Americans. Although government must play a role, we must remember that genuine cultural revival can only occur through the actions of private citizens. Over the years, people have subcontracted more and more responsibilities to government, and now realize that it isn't working. Americans are ready to take back responsibility for themselves and their communities, as they had before the era of big government. We should develop policies to encourage and accelerate this process.

CONGRESSMAN DAVID MCINTOSH

As a leader of House Republicans since 1994, Congressman McIntosh has worked tirelessly to strengthen families and provide real help to America's poor by removing governmental barriers. The Renewal Alliance provides a unique opportunity to further Representative McIntosh's agenda of restoring the family as the centerpiece of our community. Paramount in this effort will be a strive to reverse inequities in the tax code that hurt women and families. He will also focus on promoting as American Heroes those individuals and non-governmental groups that actively engage in renewing their community.

CONGRESSMAN RON PACKARD

Over the past thirty years, Washington hasn't helped America's families. It has destroyed them. Yet every social problem, no matter how severe, continues to be resolved somewhere—not by a bureaucrat behind a desk, but by some religious or community group empowered by people who care. As Members of Congress, we can tell these remarkable stories and remind Washington what the rest of America has long known—that it takes something more than a government program to change a life. The Renewal Alliance is taking a bold step away from the “Washington knows best” mentality, and empowers those institutions that have made America strong—faith, family, work and community.

CONGRESSMAN CHARLES “CHIP” PICKERING

As a husband and father of four children, I am concerned about the mountain of debt being placed on the backs of families, and the moral decay that is running rampant through our society. It is time that we return to a belief in right and wrong. I believe the best way to deal with the problems facing our country is to look away from government solutions and begin to find community, charitable and faith-based solutions that are rooted in our common values. That is why I am enthusiastic about the Renewal Alliance and the ideas that we are promoting, such as less government, more freedom, personal responsibility, and local-level solutions.

CONGRESSMAN JOSEPH R. PITTS

I believe that the most effective methods of repairing civil society come from the indigenous neighborhood organizations that offer solutions to problems of poverty and human suffering. Public officials also have the responsibility to highlight these success stories. As an Executive Member of the Renewal Alliance (RA), I am committed to involving community-based groups in the Alliance's efforts to promote social, economic, and cultural renewal. I believe that, as a Members of Congress, the bully pulpit of federal office can be used to validate these small organizations.

To that end, I have fought to eliminate legislative and regulatory barriers that hinder the effectiveness of grassroots groups. Additionally, in the fall of 1997, I held a Community Hope Summit in his district to provide 200 grassroots leaders with tools to help them raise private funds, write a public relations plan, recruit volunteers, and develop outcomes measurements. Leadership in this area has raised the status these vital groups, and has helped others recognize the value of community-based nonprofit organizations

CONGRESSMAN FRANK RIGGS

Representative Riggs is Chairman of the House Education Committee's Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth and Families. Riggs sponsored the Low-Income School Choice Demonstration Act—an integral part of the Community renewal Act—which was designed to provide enhanced educational opportunities and school choice to students in America's most impoverished cities. Riggs, a former police officer and school board president, will focus much of his education subcommittee's work on the problems facing parents, students and educators in America's urban areas.

CONGRESSMAN JAMES E. ROGAN

As a former gang-murder prosecutor and criminal trial court judge, I have seen the scourge of violence and drugs in our neighborhoods from the front lines. I have seen how communities falter when business and industry leave for greener pastures. But I have also seen what a difference the time, energy, and love of concerned citizens can make in the lives of our neighbors. We must not cease in this battle to recapture our communities.

Solving local problems requires local experts, not Washington insiders. By moving government in the direction of individual empowerment—not enrollment—we can all contribute to community renewal and investment for our future. Our best efforts, however, are only the beginning. Those working day-after-day in our communities know best what works and what does not. It is now time to give them the autonomy, support, and encouragement to make our communities and our nation a better place.

SENATOR RICK SANTORUM

I am honored to be a sponsor of the Renewal Alliance legislative initiative, REAL Life, which I believe will do more to assist those suffering from poverty, addiction, crime, abuse and neglect than any legislative initiative offered in decades. This approach, which addresses the breakdown of families, communities and values, will bring about the most radical shift from government dependency to self-sufficiency since welfare reform.

It is our objective to rebuild lives and communities by promoting non-governmental solutions to human problems—to empower families, communities, businesses, churches, synagogues, and charities in their efforts to reweave the social fabric of inner-city neighborhoods. We believe that by concentrating on education reform, economic empowerment, and the renewal of community institutions, we can help cities, and their poorest inhabitants gain their share of America's prosperity, pursue happiness, and live the American dream.

We recognize that the federal government is not the solution, but that it has a role to play. Top-down, government-run programs are not as responsive, efficient or effective as community-based, and community-owned initiatives. However, government can strengthen and facilitate charities, it can encourage caring, and it can empower families and communities to care for their own.

CONGRESSMAN MARK SOUDER

As Republican Staff Director of the House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, and later as Deputy Chief of Staff to Senator Coats, Mark Souder traveled the country to learn firsthand how people in low-income areas addressed problems that were tearing apart their communities—substance abuse, lack of affordable housing, inadequate education and the absence of fathers, to name a few. Souder worked closely with grassroots leaders of the empowerment movement to advance solutions that were proven to work. Now, as Chairman of the newly formed Subcommittee on Empowerment, Congressman Souder looks forward to applying the principles of empowerment to remove the barriers to economic opportunity that keep too many Americans in a cycle of poverty and despair.

CONGRESSMAN JAMES TALENT

A leader in the fight to reform our failing welfare system, Jim Talent was tasked by the Republican leadership to look at the next step in rebuilding our nations' low-income communities. He and Representative Watts talked with hundreds of community leaders nationwide to find out how the federal government could stop hurting home-grown solutions and start government that supports, rather than replaces, vital community institutions: faith, family, work, and community. Out of this grew the Saving Our Children: the American Community Renewal Act, H.R. 3467, designed to create stronger economic foundations, support stable families, and empower faith-based institutions.

CONGRESSMAN ZACH WAMP

A compassionate, conservative approach must include a new agenda anchored in the principles of faith, family and freedom. Simply opposing the failed welfare programs of the Great Society is not enough. I believe that the real work will be to replace these social experiments with legislation designed to strengthen great American institutions like the family, charities, free enterprise and limited government.

CONGRESSMAN J. C. WATTS

Representative Watts was asked by the Republican leadership to look at the next step to welfare reform in rebuilding our nations low-income communities. He and Representative Talent talked with hundreds of community leaders nationwide to find out how the federal government could stop hurting home-grown solutions and start helping them. What they heard was the need for moral and economic renewal and a government that supports rather than replaces vital community institutions: faith, family, work, and community. Out of this grew the American Community Renewal Act (H.R. 1031), designed to create stronger economic foundations, support stable families, and empower faith-based institutions.